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REVIEWS

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E. Kate Stewart, *Arthur Sherburne Hardy: Man of American Letters*.
Potomac, Md.: Scripta Humanistica, 1986. 128 pp. \$28.50

Even scholars specializing in nineteenth-century American literature are not usually acquainted with Arthur Sherburne Hardy, and to those who are he is likely to be a name they have come across in an American diplomatic history book. Stewart reminds us, however, that fame is often fickle, for in his day Hardy was well known in many fields, including several of those of American literature:

A professor of mathematics, a diplomat, and a magazine editor Hardy did not devote his entire energies to imaginative writing. Besides five mathematical or scientific works, he turned out two volumes of poetry, a biography, a collection of letters, miscellaneous speeches, an autobiography, and eight works of fiction...one historical and four realistic novels, a detective novel, and numerous short stories. (p. 5)

Stewart assures us that Hardy shared William Dean Howells's concept of fiction. "Realism," he once told a reporter, "makes a storehouse of everyday facts. It includes the puddle filled with mud which is in the middle of the street. But this puddle of mud also contains a reflection of the blue sky." But like Henry James he was less interested in plot and more concerned with character consciousness. Writing in 1921, Fred Lewis Pattee remarked, "Few have ever brought to fiction a mind more keenly alert and more analytical." At the time Hardy's *The Wind of Destiny* (1886) appeared a reviewer in the *Catholic World* commented that "the manner and matter of the novel is charming," but he lamented that it was "devoted to fate...hopeless philosophy." (Apparently Hardy was primarily concerned with the effect of fate on human affairs.)

Hardy's poetry was a reflection of his conviction that his was "more an age of prose than of poetry." His verse reflects the controversy between traditional poetry and free verse. With his careful attention to poetic diction, however, Hardy comes closer to the traditional mold. Two of his poems "Francesca of Rimini" (1878) and "City of Dreams," Stewart points out, "are essentially prose narratives in verse, and in their romantic tones they closely resemble the historical novels that were extremely popular at the time." Despite their prosiness, however, both pieces with their focus on nature and the past resemble closely poets of the English Romantic school. Stewart admits, however, that though Hardy's verse is not doggerel, it "lacks the originality of his fiction." But, she insists that Hardy was a

professional craftsman, that in addition to his novels (these, if not extremely popular, were widely read in his day), his stories were published in the leading magazines of the time: *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Century*, *The Critic*, *McClure's* and *Cosmopolitan*, as well as in the *avant-garde* art magazines, such as *The Chap-Book*, often compared for its selectivity and impact on writers and readers of serious literature to *The Yellow Book*.

Stewart believes that despite Hardy's failure to achieve immortality, he merits some scholarly attention. I agree and that's what this interesting and illuminating study provides. Surely it makes one want to know even more about Hardy, but since I have read Stewart's fascinating account of this "Man of American Letters," I have examined the collections in two American university libraries, neither being the university I represent, and I have found not a single one of Hardy's books.

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Donald Pearce and Herbert Schneidau, eds. *Ezra Pound / Letters / John Theobald*. Redding Ridge, Conn.: Black Swan, 1984. 161 pp. \$22.50

In 1957, John Theobald, a teacher at what was then San Diego State College, wrote to Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeths, asking him to indicate his choices for a high-school poetry textbook that Theobald was compiling. Pound, desperate for correspondents and with a lifelong habit of looking for disciples, responded. This book records their eleven-month correspondence, gathering letters from 26 April 1957 to 19 October 1958—the last year of Pound's incarceration.

Academic industries, of which the Pound Industry is one of the more active, perpetuate themselves partly by reviving and scrutinizing trivia, and this volume of cryptic jabberings is one of the industry's less happy products. Pound is one of modern literature's great letter-writers, typically showing style, wit, verve, insight, and boundless generosity. But the Pound of 1957-58 was not the Pound who wrote those crackling letters to Joyce and Williams in the 'teens and 'twenties. Craving communication with the outside world at the same time as his sadly fragmented mind has left him only sporadically able to carry it on, Pound in his St. Elizabeths years has intensified his already manic epistolary shorthand into a sometimes inscrutable private code